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- ART. VI. — 1. *The Autobiography of LEIGH HUNT.* A new Edition by the Author ; with further Revision, and an Introduction by his Eldest Son. London : Smith, Elder, & Co. 1860. pp. xvi. and 412.
2. *The Correspondence of LEIGH HUNT.* Edited by his Eldest Son. With a Portrait. London : Smith, Elder, & Co. 1862. 2 vols. Small 8vo. pp. viii. and 333, 331.

As the descendant of American parentage, as an author who for more than half a century occupied a conspicuous, if not a foremost, rank among the literati of England, as one who through a long life maintained a consistent adhesion to principles which, in his own country, are considered radical, but in ours liberal, as the friend of Shelley, Keats, and Lamb, and as a cheerful and genial companion in gloomy hours, Leigh Hunt seems to have no slight claim to our interest and attention. So quiet and even was the tenor of his life, and so disconnected, toward its termination, with either literary or political discussion, that comparatively little is known of him on this side of the Atlantic ; and we deem it no unworthy task to bring him before our readers, now that he has so recently passed away. Of the volumes before us, the collection of letters has been issued from the press within a year ; the Autobiography, improved and revised by the author from earlier editions, and enlarged by an account of his last days and death, by his eldest son, was put forth in 1860, within a year of the close of his life. We are somewhat disappointed in the letters, as they fail, we conceive, when read without a previous perusal of his other works, to give a true impression of the author's manner of composition, or the frame of his mind. The Autobiography, on the other hand, displays the actual man, admirably illustrating every strong and every weak point in his character, presenting a perfect key to his feelings and prejudices, and setting forth just such a person as a study of his works would lead one to conjure up, namely, a sprightly, affectionate, restless, and yet timid and self-conceited man. The attention of the author was evidently concentrated, in the composition of this work, on himself. His

minuteness in the description of the most trivial incidents of his childhood and youth is almost always interesting, but occasionally becomes undignified and irksome. It must be confessed that in this respect he puts himself in danger of falling under that description of weakness which Sir William Hamilton, in his *Metaphysics*, predicates of a vulgar mind, which, he says, "forgets and spares nothing, — and is ignorant that all which does not concur to the effect destroys or weakens it." A good instance of this tendency in our author occurs, where, speaking of his timidity when a child, and his unwillingness to be alone in the dark, he mentions a book in which he had seen a picture of some horrible monster that had frightened him, and thereupon enters into a long and learned disquisition as to what the monster was, quotes Pliny, Aristotle, and Ctesias as to its origin and etymology of its name, dives into classical antiquities to ascertain its localities and habitudes, and spares no pains to enlighten us in regard to this uncouth beast which he found in a juvenile story-book. The same minuteness marks his details as to his family, which are dull enough when confined to his immediate progenitors, and, extended to his brothers and cousins, become utterly intolerable.

On the whole, however, it is an entertaining little volume, full of interesting information about the literary and political celebrities of the times, accurate in the delineation of the manners and state of society among his contemporaries, delightful for its free and almost careless tone, and charming for its descriptions of Italian cities and scenery. Hunt lived in a time which we like to read about. His rank among literary men was such, that he had abundant opportunities for observing the tendencies of literature, and the personal excellences and prejudices of those who took the lead in the different coteries into which authors were at that time divided. We do not propose to enter into the elaborate criticism of his various works; but rather to dwell upon his personal history, and to glance cursorily at others who form the background of the picture in which he has taken good care to make Leigh Hunt the central figure.

The regency and the reign of George IV., disgraced as they

were by the profligacy of the sovereign and the easy morality of his court, were nevertheless brilliant in military achievements, and in the creations of literary and æsthetic genius. The preceding age had produced no such generals as Wellington and Uxbridge, no such poets as Byron, Coleridge, and Wordsworth, no such novelist as Scott, no such critics as Lord Francis Jeffrey and Sir James Mackintosh. The arts of literature, which had become heavy and methodical by the too sensitive ear of Pope, the graceful monotony of Addison, and the ponderous genius of Johnson, were in this period restored to a vigorous independence, such as gave full vent to those illustrious writers who adorned the otherwise splendid reign of Elizabeth. A few years ago some of the foremost of those who figured as reformers in George's reign were yet living, — Rogers, De Quincey, Moore, Wordsworth, Talfourd. Now but two remain to represent that brilliant era. Lord Brougham still lives to adorn Westminster Hall by his yet vivid eloquence, to elevate science by his patient and penetrating research, and to enrich letters by a critical ability and a memory rich in historic lore, such as few men possess in the prime of life. Walter Savage Landor, at the great age of eighty-seven, retains that vivacious temperament and matchless humor which a half-century ago attracted to his companionship the first scholars and *savans* of Europe. Leigh Hunt survived most of his contemporaries, and died in a good old age in the latter part of the year 1859.

A consideration of the literature of the period referred to discovers great variety, both in the current of thought and in the different styles which gave it expression. This is more especially the case with the poets; and from this diversity a natural consequence was that literary men separated into cliques, each representing peculiar characteristics of sentiment or diction, and each bitterly antagonistic to all the others. Thus arose different schools of poetry, all agreeing perhaps in rejecting the poets of the eighteenth century as too far enslaved by the empire of rhythm and metre over ideas, all eschewing the rules enounced by the schools of which Pope and Goldsmith were representatives, but seeking, each after its own peculiar system, to reform and to elevate by widely

diverging methods. It is not proposed to analyze the different styles which thus took their rise, that task having been thoroughly executed long since by the ablest critics both of England and this country; but merely to call attention to them, that our author may be put in the class to which he was attached, and that his position in the literary world may be fully illustrated. Of the new generation of poets, Lord Byron rose first, and assumed for a while the dictatorship of poetry and of popular applause. As his rise was sudden, so was his subsequent downfall; and after being alternately flattered by the highest encomiums, and condemned by the bitterest anathemas, of his countrymen, he finally was entirely superseded by other schools. Then the "Lake" poets, at first and for many years assailed by the fiercest enmity of an almost unanimous critical opinion, and doomed by the most powerful censors to oblivion and ignominy, slowly approached the public ear, and finally established themselves securely in the popular esteem,—Byron having already met his fate, and retired in despair from his own country forever. Of the Lake school, Coleridge, Southey, and Wordsworth were the shining lights; and they, uniting on common ground in their political, religious, and literary opinions, first opened a new path into which poetic inspiration should be directed, going back to the Elizabethan era for their precedents in disregarding metrical accuracy. While this coterie was yet struggling for supremacy, there appeared, trumpeted by Leigh Hunt in the *Examiner*, what their contemporary enemies contemptuously called the "Cockney School," of which Keats became the martyr and Shelley the hope. Attracted by the erratic genius of the one, and by the independent mind and warm heart of the other, Hunt proposed to himself the glory of heralding the approach of a new era, which should eclipse the fairest periods of poetical history. The novel opinions to which the revolutionists of France gave birth, harmonizing with their enthusiastic spirits, became the creed of the Cockneys; and their issues were heresies, the more dangerous because clothed in the alluring splendor of poetry. The result of so ill-judged an attempt to seduce public sentiment from an appreciation of healthy to a taste for morbid literature, was a just retribution

upon its authors ; for Shelley was not only expelled from the University of Oxford for atheistical opinions, but was shunned alike by literary men and by the public ; and Keats, after insanely endeavoring to gain for himself national favor, received, at the hands of the Quarterly Review, a fatal blow to his current reputation, if not to his enduring fame. Leigh Hunt was endowed with much less genius, less independence, and more foresight, than his unfortunate friends. His writings evinced less originality, less brilliancy of imagination, less startling scepticism. He therefore escaped the withering rebukes of those critics who assumed, and soon acquired, the position of oracles for the general judgment. His mind, too, was more healthily organized than those of Shelley and Keats ; and instead of rushing headlong into the wild theories of Voltaire and Mirabeau, he stopped at a reasonable independence of ecclesiastical conventionality, and, rejecting the doctrine of "liberty, equality, fraternity," as interpreted by the Jacobins and Republicans, clung to limited monarchy with all its faults.

For several generations the ancestors of Leigh Hunt, on his father's side, were natives of Barbados ; and his great-grandfather, grandfather, and father were all clergymen of the Established Church of England. Isaac Hunt, at an early age, was sent to college in Philadelphia, and afterwards in New York. It was at the latter place, as Leigh tells us, that a romantic incident occurred, which was materially to affect his future. When he was delivering his oration, at the close of his collegiate course, two young ladies among his audience, charmed doubtless no less by his graceful delivery and flowing style, than by his blue eyes and well-chiselled features, were so indiscreet as to fall in love with him. With one of them he was equally well pleased, and after a courtship which seems to have derived its chief charm from mutual recitations of the poets, they were married. It is an amusing feature of this incident, that the two ladies stood to each other in the relation of aunt and niece, though they were nearly of the same age.

The mother of Leigh Hunt was a daughter of Stephen Shewell, a Philadelphia merchant of wealth, and of Quaker descent. Dr. Franklin was intimate at his house, and once

offered to teach Miss Shewell the guitar ; but she was too shy to accept his tutorship. Mr. Isaac Hunt was at first destined for the Church ; but showing a disinclination to that profession, he began the study of law in Philadelphia. When the Revolution broke out, he warmly espoused the cause of the King, and so earnest was he in the expression of his opinions, that he was mobbed by the populace. He was obliged to escape by stealth from the city, and, having succeeded in reaching a ship bound for England, he made the voyage in her. He now entered the Church, and when Mrs. Hunt afterward joined him, she found him officiating as Rector of Bentinck Chapel at Paddington. He afterward became tutor to Mr. Leigh, nephew of the Duke of Chandos, the gentleman for whom he named the subject of this sketch. He seems at this time to have had high hopes of a bishopric, through the influence of the Duke, his patron ; but he never rose above the rectorship of a popular chapel. As Leigh Hunt describes his father, we cannot help assimilating him to Thackeray's character of Charles Honeyman, in "The Newcomes," with his smooth, liquid voice, his flowing style, his studied grace, his sleek appearance, and his occasional convivial indiscretions. He seems to have loved gayety and fun, and to have cared more for worldly comfort than for spiritual food. His indolence soon reduced him to poverty ; and although he had been popular as a preacher, he now found but few friends to relieve him. From a High-Churchman and a Tory, he became a Universalist and a semi-Republican ; and these later views of the father were inculcated in his early lessons to his son, who adhered to them through life. Mrs. Hunt is described by her son as a sensitive woman, keenly alive to the appearance of distress, melancholy, but withal of great moral courage.

Leigh Hunt was born on the 19th of October, 1784, at Southgate, a beautiful village in Middlesex ; a spot also known as the resting-place of Coleridge and Lamb, and formerly as the residence of Arbuthnot, Akenside, Shelley, and Keats. He was a sickly child, and the village physician used to predict that he would die an idiot before he was fifteen. He was early sent to France to improve his health, and such was the watchful solicitude of his mother, that he finally grew up a healthy,

bright-eyed lad, ready at all times for study or frolic. As he became more mature, his character developed partly after the disposition of his father, and partly after that of his mother. At times he would be happy and boisterous, and, donning his childish sword and cap, he would amuse himself with military sports ; at other times he would become grave and solemn, and, stealthily abstracting his father's surplice and bands from the closet, would proceed to deliver a pompous homily to the astonished and delighted servant-maid.

His early childhood was passed during a period peculiarly eventful in the history of England. The American Revolution, in which both his parents had a personal interest, had but a little before his birth resulted in the success of the Colonies. The French Revolution was approaching, and ere long would burst upon the doomed people, and at one blow shake philosophy, religion, social order, and political system to their foundations. Burke, Fox, and Pitt were rising to the leadership of the House of Commons ; Goldsmith and Johnson had just disappeared forever from the scenes of their enduring triumphs ; Cowper was the presiding genius of poetry ; the Empress Catharine was startling Europe by her masculine energy and warlike enthusiasm ; Great Britain was on the verge of passing from the government of a crazy father to that of a licentious and indolent son ; Voltaire and Paine were attracting to their intellectual dominion the flower of the Continental youth ; Gibbon was alluring by his stately sophistry the minds of men from the perception of the true influence of Christianity ; Sheridan was the dictator of the drama ; and Mrs. Siddons was just engaging the applause of the British public by her majestic presence and wonderful passion. Hunt's early recollection teemed with such remembrances as these. He had seen Pitt in the House of Commons appealing to his colleagues with a "loud, important, and hollow voice" ; he had looked with wonder upon Horne Tooke, whom he had been taught to believe a man of surprising learning and sagacity ; he had met John Wilkes and Charles Townshend, and was thus enabled to contrast the ugliest and the handsomest man of the time ; he had listened with rapture to the queen of the British stage ;



he had been charmed with the matchless beauty of the Duchess of Devonshire.

In 1792 he was admitted a student in the school of Christ's Hospital, which was originally intended by Edward VI. as a foundation for poor orphan children born in London, but which afterward extended its benefits to the middle classes as well as the lower. In this school had been educated some of the first writers and scholars of England ; — Richardson, the genial author of " Pamela " and " Clarissa " ; Bishop Stillingfleet, whose courtly eloquence charmed the nobility of Queen Anne's time ; Mitchell, the translator of Aristophanes ; Horne, the theologian ; Barnes, for many years editor of the Times ; Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Charles Lamb.

Leigh Hunt was placed in the Grammar School, devoted to the instruction of those who intended pursuing the liberal professions. Many are the amusing incidents of his school-days with which he entertains us ; how the quaint dresses of the scholars used to astonish the passers in the street ; how, indignant at the cruelty of one of the larger scholars toward a smaller, he soundly thrashed the bully, and humbled him into a peaceable lad ; how the master, Boyer, was a tyrant after the fashion of Squeers, and seemed to delight in punishing poor Leigh for stammering ; how they were preached to alternately by exceedingly prosy and exceedingly energetic divines ; how all the boys looked up to a Grecian, and how the Grecians used to walk straight forward, overturning with exquisite composure the smaller urchins who happened to be in their path ; how many a cunning trick, sometimes successful, sometimes abortive, was played upon the dreaded master, and how a spirited boy once in a while braved his fury, and by impudence conquered him ; how he once saw Lamb, " with his fine intelligent face," on a visit to his Alma Mater ; with what enthusiasm he spent his sixpences at the book-stall round the corner, on an humble edition of the poets ; how he learned to appreciate Homer and Ovid, to love Goldsmith and Pope, to study Atterbury and Wharton ; how he formed friendships lasting and delightful, which were always to be kept fresh ; and with what tearful regret he finally left that scene of his joys and sorrows and his best friendships, and, assuming a hat and coat,

entered once more the bustling world. It is the old story of school-life in England, vividly told, and rich in pleasant details, attractive alike by its simplicity and its hearty enthusiasm.

While at this school he became intimate with two families, of which he speaks with such affectionate interest that we cannot avoid noticing them. One was that of Benjamin West, F. R. S., the illustrious painter and elegant gentleman. Mr. West had married a relative of Mrs. Hunt, and was an American by birth. In his house Leigh was ever welcome, and many were the delightful hours he spent there. He says of Mr. West, "He was a man with mild, regular features ; and, though of Quaker origin, looked what he was, a painter to the court. His appearance was so gentlemanly, that the moment he changed his gown for a coat he seemed to be full dressed." The young scholar was wont to wander with rapture among the productions of the artist's pencil ; wrapt in admiration at Sir Philip Sidney giving up the water to the dying soldier ; awestricken at the wild brilliancy of Ophelia's countenance ; inspired with pious reverence as he gazed upon the calm, perfect face of Christ Healing the Sick. He says, "My mother and I used to go down the gallery as if we were treading on wool." The quiet kindness of the Wests, the pleasant humor of the artist, and the always cheerful welcome, awaken affectionate remembrances of those delightful visits. Nor does he forget to mention the footman, who figured in his master's pictures as an apostle, and the butler, who wore his own likeness with proud ostentation on his shirt bosom.

The other family of which he retains pleasant reminiscences was that of Mr. Godfrey Thornton, who lived in Austin Friars. There his recollections teem with lawns and rich gardens, cordial welcomes and music, hospitality and female loveliness, a union of gayety and of intellectual delight. We would gladly review with him these scenes brimful of happiness, but we are compelled to desist for want of room.

Leigh's first love was Fanny Dayrell, his cousin, a bright West Indian lass, who, as being older than himself, used to dampen his ardor by contemptuously calling him *petit garçon*. She soon after married, and they were separated for many years ; but when they again met, after many vicissitudes

to both, Leigh confesses to an emotion for which he had to seek his wife's forgiveness.

After leaving school he turned his attention to the study of the profession which he had determined to follow,—the unsubstantial profession of poetry and literature. In 1802 his father published a volume of his verses, which, according to himself and every one else, were wretched. Nevertheless, the critics dealt with it with unaccountable gentleness, and for a time he was quite a lion among the *litterati*. He then became much interested in two subjects,—the stage and military life. Bonaparte was threatening to crown his victorious course by achieving the conquest of England. Volunteers were forthcoming in multitudes, and companies were set to drilling throughout the kingdom. Leigh Hunt enlisted, but was soon discharged, with the rest of the valorous youth, when the imagined occasion disappeared. He attended the opera and theatre sedulously, and gives us charming descriptions of the eminent artists of the day. Catalani, with her wonderful vocal volume; Grassini, with her superb contralto; Pasta, uniting grace and tenderness; Jack Bannister, with his fair, round John Bull face and hearty honesty; Mundar, exciting a roar without uttering a sound; Kemble, with his Roman stateliness and sonorous declamation; Siddons, with her dreary and terrible majesty; Mrs. Jordan, with her fine spirits and happy countenance,—all appear to us through our author's delineation, moving, speaking, provoking us to sadness, mirth, and wonder, as they did the generation of fifty years ago.

It was at this time that he wrote his first prose, confining himself mainly to theatrical criticism, which he contributed to a paper called "The Traveller." These essays were little better than his verses had been; they nevertheless gained for him a species of popularity. He devoted himself more earnestly than ever to books, among which the novels of Fielding, Smollett, Radcliffe, and La Fontaine were his especial favorites. This taste for novel-reading continued through life. Few will agree with his strictures on historians, for whom he entertained but little respect; and his censure of them, as "assuming a dignity for which I saw no particular grounds, as unphilosophic and ridiculous in their avoidance of personal anecdote, and,

above all, as being narrow-minded and timeserving in confining their subjects to wars and party government," is unjust, exaggerated, and, as applied to the majority, totally false. But the writer for whom he evinces the most entire admiration is Voltaire. This enemy of religion and order he erects into a noble reformer; he contrives to find in him the most exalted virtues, while his vices are either ignored or rapidly passed over. It was undoubtedly this author who imbued Leigh Hunt with those revolutionary ideas which afterward brought upon him merited misfortune and obloquy. He became a member of a debating-club, among whose members were Thomas Wilde, afterward Lord Chancellor Truro, and Frederick Pollok, now Chief Baron of the Exchequer; but a habit of stammering, which rendered it exceedingly difficult for him to speak in public, induced him to leave this assembly, and determined him against the pursuit of a political career.

In the year 1805 his brother, John Hunt, established a paper called "The News," and Leigh was engaged to contribute to it the department of theatrical criticism. He determined to break loose from the custom which uniformly prevailed among critics, of exchanging compliments with the actors, and bartering puffs for tickets and suppers. He dashed about indiscriminately on the stage, doomed Betty to oblivion, assailed Kemble with a force which he imagined would annihilate the great Shakespearian, and sought, at the age of twenty-one, to obliterate the fame of "The Rivals" and "The School for Scandal." These criticisms were published in a volume in 1807. The project of the News having failed of success, the brothers Hunt again essayed as journalists, and in 1808 "The Examiner" appeared as the result of their plans. It was the intention of the proprietors to make this journal the organ of the radical Reformists, of the ultra liberal theologians, and of independent literary criticism. It went beyond Fox in its advocacy of political innovation; it tended toward, if it did not impliedly encourage, an approval of Bonaparte's career; and it was unscrupulously malignant toward the King and his ministers. For a short time Leigh Hunt was a clerk in the War Office, at the head of which Lord Sidmouth presided; but finding himself placed in the invidious position of attacking

the party in power, while he was fed by its generosity, he resigned his position and devoted himself exclusively to literary labor. While editor of the *Examiner*, he made the acquaintance of many literary men, whose names have since become household words. At the table of Mr. Hill, proprietor of "*The Monthly Mirror*," he met the generous and sensitive author of "*The Pleasures of Hope*." He describes him as a genial companion, overflowing with humor, free and cordial, lively and earnest in conversation, not without a mixture of sarcasm, and, though rarely, of bitterness. His personal appearance — which indeed we might guess from his portraits — was classically handsome, and his manners elegant and scholastic. "Some gentle Puritan," says Hunt, "seemed to have crossed the breed, and to have left a stamp upon his face"; but "he appeared not at all grateful for this, and when his critiques and his Virgilianism were over, very unlike a Puritan he talked!" Under the same hospitable roof he also found Theodore Hook, whose talent for extempore verse astonished and amused the company, while his imitations of eminent characters were the more ludicrous for their exaggerated lifelikeness. The comedian Matthews entertained them with similar exhibitions, remorselessly bringing forth Garrick, Siddons, and Sir Walter, for the edification of his friends. James and Horace Smith, the authors of "*Rejected Addresses*," also contributed a large share to the good cheer of the guests.

The *Examiner*, meanwhile, became so bitter in its onslaughts upon the government, that two prosecutions for libel were brought against the proprietors by Sir Vicary Gibbs, the Attorney-General, both of which were, however, dropped before they reached the judgment of the court. One of these libels was an attack on the Duke of York, then commanding the army in chief, for corruption in the sale of commissions; the other was a contemptuous article on the King. About this time (1809) Leigh Hunt married Marianne, daughter of Thomas Kent, Esq. In 1810, so successful had the *Examiner* become, on account of its popularity among the lower classes, that Mr. John Hunt established a quarterly magazine called "*The Reflector*," and the duty of editing it devolved on Leigh Hunt. To this periodical several of the most prominent

writers contributed, among others, Lamb, Barnes, Dyer, and Aikin; but, in spite of every effort, it failed through want of funds and encouragement. The fact was, that the radicals were not generally from the richer classes, and hence could not support a quarterly. It lived long enough, however, to give utterance to much partisan venom, and in its early pages appeared a work by Leigh Hunt, which his own subsequent judgment failed to justify, and in which many noble writers were attacked, namely, "The Feast of the Poets." It presented to the ridicule of the public the most eminent poets of the age, and was particularly severe upon Sir Walter Scott; the principal objection to whom, in the author's mind, seems to have been that he was a Tory. We are happy to state that the author himself acknowledges this production to have been "a just ground of offence"; and certain it is that it brought down upon him nearly every literary celebrity, and caused an enmity to his paper which wellnigh destroyed its existence. An excessive act of presumption soon after completed the ruin which he had barely escaped by the denunciation of critics. At an annual dinner of the Irish on St. Patrick's day, 1812, the name of the Prince Regent was received with groans and hisses. After some discussion of this indignity by the Whig and Tory organs, the Examiner, ever ready for a verbal affray, took up the subject, and came out in the severest denunciation of the heir apparent. Hunt went so far in this article as to call the prince a liar, a libertine head over ears in disgrace, a despiser of domestic ties, the companion of gamblers and demireps, and other epithets equally gross. The government was prompt in bringing the authors of this libel to the judicial bar. The result was, that, after a careful trial, Leigh Hunt and his brother were sent to prison for two years, and fined one thousand pounds. Such was the state of our author's health, that confinement in the ordinary cells might endanger his life; he was therefore transferred to the prison infirmary. Here he found a pleasant room, leading into a small but tasteful garden. "I papered the walls with a trellis of roses; I had the ceiling colored with clouds and sky; the barred windows I screened with Venetian blinds; and when my bookcases were set up with their busts, and flowers and a piano-

forte made their appearance, perhaps there was not a handsomer room that side of the water." Thus with his exquisite taste did he contrive to make his new abode inhabitable; he had his family about him; his books were at his elbow; pen and paper were at hand, ready to fix a passing thought; and — what was no mean consideration — he had a jailer who was anxious to make him comfortable and happy. It was while he was imprisoned that he made the acquaintance of some of the first men of the time. Thomas Moore and Lord Byron visited him in his seclusion. Hazlitt came to cheer and amuse the martyred radical. The venerable Bentham, now grown old in the service of political science, took pains to make the acquaintance of one about whom so much had been said. The Lambs, too, ever ready to extend their sympathy to those in distress, were constant in their exertions to relieve his discomfort. On the 3d of February, 1815, Hunt again breathed free air. He took board with his family soon after his release on the Edgeware Road, near his brother's house. It was here that the acquaintance begun in prison with Lord Byron ripened into friendship. Hunt's recollection of this remarkable person was that of a rather corpulent and strikingly handsome man, whose countenance wore an expression "of spirit and elevation," and who had "a very noble look." Byron seems at this time to have taken quite a liking to Hunt's society, and frequently urged him to go to the theatre and other amusements with him. His calls were very often repeated; and, as it was before the current of public opinion had turned against him, he was always vivacious and good-humored. Another visitor at his house soon after his release from prison was William Wordsworth. Upon Hunt's showing him his own works beside those of Milton in the library, the poet felt much gratified, and from that moment looked upon the author of the flattery with favor. He was a dignified man, with a rough but pleasant voice, prematurely gray and bald, with a very *grand* manner of speaking. "I never beheld," says Hunt, "eyes that looked so inspired or supernatural."

In the year 1816 Mr. Hunt went to reside in Hampstead for his health; and here he finished his "Story of Rimini," which had been commenced before his imprisonment. This

poem is pronounced by the English critics the best that ever issued from his pen. It was after the manner of Dryden, and some portions of the poem are not unworthy imitations of him.

We are now at that period when he formed the remarkable friendship with Percy Bysshe Shelley, which was to remain tender and uninterrupted during the life of the latter. He had seen Shelley early in his own career as a journalist, but it was not until 1816 that they were so thrown together as to become intimate; and meanwhile those domestic calamities and discords had occurred which nearly made the poet mad. Shelley and Keats met each other for the first time in Hunt's house at Hampstead. Our author had met the latter when he was at work on the *Examiner*, and they had been mutually pleased with the acquaintance. The young poets, aristocratic and plebeian, became friends, although Keats was rather shy at first, distrusting as he did men of gentle birth. In some points of character, they resembled each other closely; in others, they were utterly opposite. Both were melancholy, looking naturally upon the dark side of every question and circumstance. Both tended toward atheism, and both were radical reformists in morals, society, and government. Both rejected the ancient models of poetry. But Keats was sullen, suspicious, and cold; while Shelley was cordial, ingenuous, and simple-hearted. Keats dreaded, and Shelley longed to love, every man. Keats harped upon specific subjects, and thought in a limited sphere; Shelley at one time gloried in the fields and flowers and landscapes, at another was held in awe by mighty subjects of eternal moment. But it melts our dislike of Keats's irritableness into compassion for his misery, when we think of that young life, wasted by malignant disease, disappointed in every hope by continued neglect or insult,—when we see him departing from his native land, which he was never again to behold, dragging his weary body to Italy, and, to the last despairing, but gentle, lying down to die among the tombs and ruins of the Eternal City. “Keats, when he died,” says Leigh Hunt, “had just completed his four-and-twentieth year. He was under the middle height; and his lower limbs were small in comparison with the upper,



but neat and well turned. His shoulders were very broad for his size ; he had a face in which energy and sensibility were remarkably mixed up, — an eager power, checked and made patient by ill health. Every feature was at once strongly cut and delicately alive ; the eyes mellow and glowing, large, dark, and sensitive. At the recital of a noble action or a beautiful thought they would suffuse with tears, and his mouth trembled.”

Unfortunately for the prosperity of the Examiner, Tory principles guided a large majority of the English people, as well as of the Continental communities ; and in the year 1821 it had reached the end of its influence. Leigh Hunt, discouraged by the failure of his exertions in that direction, now determined to accept the invitation of his friend Shelley, who pressed him to go to Italy, where the latter was then residing. Shelley had conceived the project of establishing, conjointly with Byron and Hunt, a periodical of liberal bias, to advocate the ideas which were congenial to them all, to edit it in Italy, and to circulate it throughout Europe. Hunt embarked with his family in a vessel bound for the Mediterranean in November, 1821 ; but, being disabled by a storm in the Channel, the ship was obliged to put in at Plymouth. There Hunt remained, taking lodgings for the winter, until May, 1822, when he again sailed, and arrived at Genoa in the middle of the following month. His description of the voyage, his impressions on seeing for the first time the celebrated spots on the route, and his reflections while on shipboard, are full of interest ; but we cannot pause to revert to them. He staid in Genoa but a day or two, and set sail on the 28th of June for Leghorn, where he was to meet Byron and Shelley. He found the noble poet cosily domiciled at a delightful villa called Monte Nero, a short drive from the city, — the same house, indeed, which Smollett, the novelist, had occupied in his last days. Thence he went, in company with Byron, to Leghorn, where they met Shelley, and they all repaired to Pisa, the city residence of Byron. Hunt was provided with apartments in his Lordship’s house. The three enthusiasts, wandering about the curious old city, gave themselves up to rapturous dreams of future renown, and eagerly discussed

projects which were to confound their enemies and astonish their friends. Their delightful companionship was, however, doomed to a most melancholy end by Shelley's death, the circumstances of which are too well known to demand repetition here.

"Shelley, when he died," writes Hunt, "was in his thirtieth year. His figure was tall and slight, and his constitution consumptive. Though well turned, his shoulders were bent a little, owing to premature thought and trouble. The same cause had touched his hair with gray. Like the Staggyrite's, his voice was high and weak. His eyes were large and animated, with a dash of wildness in them; his face small, but well shaped, particularly the mouth and chin, the turn of which was very sensitive and graceful."

Hunt remained three months at Pisa after his friend's decease; and thence went to Genoa with Byron. There they set about the work which had brought them to Italy, the publication of a periodical called "The Liberal." In the first number of this work appeared Shelley's last poem, an elegant translation from Goethe, called "The May-Day Night." At Genoa, Leigh Hunt occupied the same house with Mrs. Shelley, while Byron took a separate residence, the Casa Pallavicini. Here, owing to a broad difference of character, and dissimilarity of literary taste, the friendship between the editors of the *Liberal* began to cool, and in the end turned to absolute dislike. Hunt attributes this result to his own unwillingness to humor Byron's vanity, and to praise his works in terms sufficiently enthusiastic. Byron's friends, on the contrary, assert that his Lordship had, in the first instance, overrated the literary merit of Hunt; that he discovered him to be entirely incompetent to co-operate with him in his plans; that Hunt became jealous of the other's superior powers and fame, and that it was only at his earnest solicitation that Byron first entertained the idea of joint editorship. Hunt's description of his intercourse with Byron while in Italy is very entertaining. The noble poet, he tells us, sat up late at night writing "Don Juan," with a bowl of gin and water at his elbow. He did not rise till late, and then only to lounge about the garden whistling or singing, chewing tobacco to prevent his growing corpulent, or indulging

in jocular conversation with those he happened to meet. He wore a nankeen jacket, white vest and trousers, and a small velvet cap. Their difference of opinion did not prevent good-humored banterings and discussions; and they joked each other on the fact that there was only one book which both greatly admired, and that was Boswell's Johnson. Byron, in his jocular moods, used to imitate Johnson for sport, in his manner and conversation, as well as other men of note.

After the vain attempt to make the Liberal successful, it was abandoned, and Lord Byron went to Greece, Hunt remaining at Genoa. Hunt gives us a vivid portrait of that noble city, describing its lovely site, the appearance, peculiarities, and manners of its people, the mode in which it is built, and the splendor of its edifices; accompanying us through the stately cathedrals, the galleries in which hang Raphaels and Giulios, the opera-houses, and the palaces of the illustrious dead. In the summer of 1823 he removed to Florence, so full of attraction to one who cherished historical and æsthetic reminiscences. He took a pleasant villa about two miles from the city, in a small place called Maiano. Here had once lived Boccaccio, who made the vicinity the scene of two of his stories in the Decameron, and who revelled in its graceful and varied landscape. Near by, too, was the house which was once the property of Machiavelli; and at a short distance stood the village of Settignano, where Michael Angelo first learned to animate the canvas with his marvellous creations. A man could not but be happy among such memorials. He had, too, English neighbors to sympathize in his tastes, and to talk over home news with him; and in Florence he became acquainted with Landor, who was already eminent as a poet of nature, and whose interest in the historical attractions of Florence equalled that of Hunt himself. Lord Dillon also contributed by his cordial temperament and elegant erudition to make the days pass pleasantly.

Our author meanwhile labored as much as his health would permit, translated Redi's "*Bacco in Toscana*," and wrote various essays which he called "*The Wishing-Cap*," and which were the foundation of his larger work, "*The Town*." He attempted to establish a quarterly, which was to contain

selections from the best English reviews for the entertainment of English residents ; but the sensitiveness of the Tuscan government as to political articles, and their fear lest something revolutionary might creep into the new periodical, made the endeavor futile. He wrote also parts of another work which he called "Christianism, or Belief and Unbelief Reconciled." It afterward appeared, revised with additions, under the title of "Religion of the Heart."

After staying about two years among localities which enchanted him, Hunt started, in the autumn of 1825, on his return journey, going overland, travelling slowly in carriages. In this way he had fine opportunities for observing the varieties in Italian scenery, people, and manners, passing through Bologna, Modena, Reggio, Parma, Asti, Turin, Susa ; thence crossing from the Po over the Alps to Savoy, Chambéry (where he visited Rousseau's house), Lyons, and finally to Paris. He remained in the French metropolis two days only, in which time he hastily visited the places where the main incidents of the Revolution were enacted, the palaces, and the galleries, not forgetting to spend a good share of his time in searching among the book-stalls. On the 14th of October he reached England, having been abroad more than three years. It was, indeed, with a feeling of infinite relief that he found himself again in his own country. He had recovered tolerably good health, had seen the glories of Italy, and had become a wiser man by his sojourn abroad ; but meanwhile the want of regular and lucrative employment had told upon his means of subsistence, and made him uneasy and dissatisfied. To one who had been so long among the rich scenery of Tuscany, the healthy freshness of English landscape seemed a relief ; for, however much he admired the former, his choice was to live and die amid the latter. "The pleasantest idea," says he, "which I can conceive of this world, as far as one's self and one's enjoyments are concerned, is to possess some favorite home in one's native country, and then travel over all the rest of the globe with those whom we love ; always being able to return if we please ; and ever meeting with new objects as long as we choose to stay away."

Hunt's intimate connection with what was termed the

“Cockney School,” (to which, by the by, he claims that Chaucer, Milton, and Pope belonged,) placed him at some disadvantage, owing to the unpopularity of its leading representatives. The Tories, stringently orthodox alike in politics and religion, opposed vehemently a class of men who aimed their most powerful anathemas against the existing institutions of both; and the Tories, backed by the King and the influence of Wellington, as well as by Sir Walter Scott, Southey, Coleridge, and other equally popular literary celebrities, were the controlling party in all matters of opinion. Hunt had friends, however, who thoroughly appreciated him, and to the restricted measure of their ability encouraged his efforts to obtain a livelihood by his pen. Although he seems to have retained a cheerful disposition, he was exhausted by repeated and unsuccessful effort, while his health again became precarious. He took up his residence at Highgate after his return, and there wrote the series of essays now known to the world as “The Companion.” He also wrote, about this time, “Sir Ralph Esher,” which is a fictitious memoir of a gentleman at the court of Charles II. It is a very entertaining little book, and presents in a free and unconstrained style the manners of those times, and some of the historical characters. This latter feature is one which, whenever introduced, greatly enhances the interest of a work of fiction. The vicinity of London was the only place in which literary labor could be conveniently pursued; and so Hunt removed to Old Brompton, and took rooms with Mr. Knight, with whom he issued a small daily paper called “The Tatler.” This periodical was confined to literary and theatrical subjects, which contracted its circulation so far, that after a doubtful prosperity of three years it ceased. In 1833 his poems were collected, and issued by subscription. The liberal reform of 1832, and the benignant reign of William IV., had produced a marked change in public sentiment: Tory politics and High-Church prelates no longer dictated the censorship of every emanation from the press; and consequently the new volume was far from unpopular, and met with unexpected success. Meanwhile, the precarious state of Hunt’s own health, and that of his family, induced him to remove to the quiet town of Chelsea, where they could enjoy pure

air, freedom from bustle, and an easy access to the verdure of fields and meadows; while a proximity to the metropolis afforded every opportunity for increased comfort and convenient labor. Here he continued portions of his work, "The Town," contributed frequently to the Edinburgh and Westminster, and projected a periodical called "The London Journal"; besides which he wrote a poem entitled "Captain Sword and Captain Pen." The London Journal continued until 1836, and was, as we might expect, of an entirely literary character, being made up of essays, criticisms, quotations, and, rarely, political articles.

Hunt had always had a decided taste for the drama, and a strong desire to try his hand at dramatic writing; and at different periods of his life he had attempted unsuccessfully to produce a good play. While at Chelsea, he again essayed in this field, and completed a piece called "The Legend of Florence." He greatly enjoyed this occupation; and the product of his labor, though at first rejected by the managers, was finally brought on to the boards of Covent Garden in 1840. It met with decided success; the actors were delighted with it; Planché and Mrs. Kean, according to the author, were affected to tears by it; and, what was its chief victory, the Queen herself patronized its performance several times. He also wrote "The Secret Marriage," — a piece founded on a tale of Navarre, which did not please the managers, but nevertheless displays no small merit, — "Lover's Amazements," "The Double," "Look to your Morals," and "The Palfrey." It was while residing at Chelsea that he formed an acquaintance with one whose later works have elevated him to the first rank of philosophical essayists, and whose productions had then made his name well known as a rising writer. We refer to Thomas Carlyle, "whose eyes," says Leigh Hunt, "are the finest, in every sense of the word (and I have seen many fine ones), which I have seen in a man's head." Hunt considers him a most eloquent man, with a kind and philanthropic heart, and a brain on fire at the wrongs and sophistries of mankind. His view of Carlyle's manner of attacking worldly evils is, that it is more rough and unforgiving than the author's nature would lead one to suppose; and he says,

"I believe that what Mr. Carlyle loves better than his fault-finding, with all its eloquence, is the face of any human creature that looks suffering and loving and sincere."

An application was made by the friends of Leigh Hunt to Viscount Melbourne, the Premier, for a pension, on the ground that a Liberal ministry could afford to assist one who had so long contended in behalf of the now dominant doctrines. But, although the well-known courtesy of his Lordship forbade a blunt refusal, nothing further was gained from him than a bland and indefinite promise. Hunt thinks it was because the Minister considered it unbecoming in a sovereign to grant a pension to a person who had been imprisoned by his predecessor for a libel against the crown; and this was undoubtedly a proper ground of refusal. His friends, failing in this project, set about another method for relieving his poverty. An amateur theatrical performance was given at Birmingham and Liverpool for his benefit; Ben Jonson's play of "Every Man in his Humor" was enacted; Charles Dickens took the part of "Bobadil," and personated it admirably; Forster and Jerrold helped to fill up the *rôle*; Sergeant Talfourd and Sir Edward Bulwer composed an appropriate address for the occasion; and the affair terminated with applause to the distinguished actors, and substantial profit to the recipient of the testimonial. He removed from Chelsea to Kensington, where he wrote "Imagination and Fancy," "Stories from Italian Poets," and "The Jar of Honey," and completed "The Town." He also wrote at this time the main part of the biography which is now before us. In 1849 he revived the London Journal for a while, but it failed from the usual cause, — want of funds. He was much pleased to find that his works had been republished in America, and enjoyed a good degree of popularity here; and he also had the satisfaction of seeing several of his dramas successfully reproduced in the principal theatres of the metropolis.

In the autumn of 1832 he lost a son of great merit, who promised to become eminent as a poet, and whose last words were, as his father says, "poetry itself." "I drink the morning," said he, as he drank some water which refreshed him.

The latest literary labors of Leigh Hunt were devoted to the

revision and extension of his book entitled "Religion of the Heart," in which are set forth his theological opinions and his conclusions from a long experience. It is in a genial, hopeful strain. It was eminently a work of love, not written for gain, but put forth when age had ceased to crave lucre, and with the evident intention to do good. It was his dying legacy to his children and to the world; and such is the calm and loving tenderness with which he treats every subject that passes in review before him, that one must be drawn toward him, with all his faults of self-conceit and eccentricity. His wife died in 1857; and in his closing pages he pays her a pathetic and appreciative tribute of affection. He describes her as generous, "free from every kind of jealousy, superior to illusions from the ordinary shows of prosperity." She had through life borne with him the vicissitudes of fortune without a murmur, and even cheerfully, and, when thoroughly sick and exhausted, never uttered a complaint. She was quite remarkable for the use of her pencil, received compliments from Mr. West for her proficiency in that respect, and was particularly accurate in the delineation of the human profile.

Our author himself had but just given the final touch to his Autobiography, when he, too, was summoned to the other world. He died, at the age of seventy-five, on the 28th of August, 1859, two years after his wife's departure. "So gentle," says his son, "was the final approach, that he scarcely recognized it till the very last, and then it came without terrors." His health had been failing gradually for some years; and so his friends were surprised neither by the approach nor by the quietness of his death. He had employed his last hours in assisting in the preparation of the "Shelley Memorials," designed to vindicate and to celebrate the character of his early and best-beloved friend. His memory, his clear, quick mind, his kindly temper, his love of humor, his attachment to books, remained vivid to the last day of his life. Sickness, which had enfeebled his body, had fortunately spared to him the use of those faculties which to him were peculiarly precious. He had lived to see the political reform of which he had been an earnest and a consistent advocate gradually on the ascendant; he had survived most of his contempora-



ries ; he had attained a place among the celebrated writers of his day. These few words of his son show that to the last he retained an interest in the world without, and that his affectionate nature was alive almost in death : “ His failing breath was used to express his sense of the inexhaustible kindness he had received from the family who had been so unexpectedly made his nurses ; to draw from one of his sons, by minute, eager, and searching questions, all that he could learn about the latest vicissitudes and growing hopes of Italy ; to ask the friends and children around him for news of those whom he loved ; and to send love and messages to the absent who loved him.”

In personal appearance, Leigh Hunt was tall and straight, while his eyes were black and very brilliant. His hair, early in life, was dark, but changed to pure white as he grew older. His complexion was dark. His face was decidedly intellectual, and withal indicated by its genial expression that he had a great heart. He had to a large degree that power of attracting the affection of others by a winning sympathy and a cordial manner, which he so enthusiastically attributes to his friend Charles Lamb. He was ever thinking, talking, and writing of his friends, always anxious to please them, and his chief enjoyment seems to have been in their companionship. The three salient traits that appear in his works and in his record of himself are amiableness, self-esteem, and a sprightly and almost romantic imagination. To the first he owed his chief happiness in life ; the second enabled him to keep up a stout heart against disappointment and opposition ; the third gave him the power and the will so to write that he has cheered many a weary soul, and filled many a winter evening with entertainment and instruction. His philosophy of life was, to look on the best phase of every subject and circumstance, never to despair, to meet rebuffs with a cheerful countenance, and to endure misfortune with fortitude, hoping for and living in a better time to come. In this way he survived political persecution and critical denunciation, bore sickness with patience, was melancholy without being misanthropic, was cheerful in the midst of poverty, made a happy home in a prison, and finally died, at a good

old age, contented, calm, and looking back with complacency on a varied, but, on the whole, a successful career.

There was, nevertheless, blended with this enviable disposition the alloy of partisan bigotry, a delight in making *Tories smart*, the exhibition of a bitter and malignant spirit toward those from whom he differed. There was an almost insufferable self-conceit, which magnified every action of his own into a virtue, and made his every effort, in his own esteem, an effort of rare genius. There was a want of respect for the opinion of wise men, when their wisdom did not mingle with his channels of thought. There was too much of that reckless, radical, levelling spirit, which denies respect to the powers that be, which presumes that existing institutions are evil from their mere existence, which, though it can propose nothing better, is determined to pull down at all events. Undoubtedly, according to American ideas, Leigh Hunt was right in advocating a reform of the ballot, a restriction of executive power, the limitation of aristocratic influence, and a broader toleration in religious matters. The only question is, whether his method was reasonable and judicious; whether it furthered the cause of the people to call the Prince Regent a liar and a libertine; whether it promoted toleration to sneer at the prelates of the national Church; whether it diminished the prestige of the nobility to denounce, in public prints, and with malignant emphasis, the corruptness of individual peers. It was a weakness of intellect, added to an enthusiasm which could brook no check, and which, unsustained by that philosophical calmness with which he viewed the vicissitudes of domestic fortune, failed of the desired result.

One of the best editions we have seen of Hunt's prose works is that issued in 1854, by W. P. Hazard of Philadelphia, in four volumes. The first volume is entitled "The Italian Poets," comprising biographical notices of Dante, Pulci, Boiardo, Ariosto, and Tasso, and prose translations of portions of their works. The biographical notices are written in his usual easy and colloquial manner, and are richly entertaining. The translations are not so good, and can give but a faint idea of the authors. The second volume comprehends the sprightly essays which are known as "The Indicator" and "The Com-

panion." The third volume consists of selections from British authors, and is intended to satisfy the taste of old and young alike. "It is a book," says the author in his Introduction, "(not to say it immodestly,) intended to lie in old, forlorn windows, in studies, in cottages, in cabins aboard ship, in country-inns, in country-houses, in summer-houses, in any houses that have wit enough to like it, and are not the mere victims of a table covered with books for show." It begins with childhood, and ends "with the churchyard"; for the first selection is "The Schoolmistress," by Shenstone; then follow articles for minds farther and farther advanced in maturity, and the series closes with Gray's "Elegy in a Country Churchyard." The last volume is also made up of selections from the most celebrated English poets, with short critical notices by Hunt, and with an introductory essay entitled, "What is Poetry?"

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ART. VII. — *Le Mont Olympe et l'Acarnanie, Exploration de ces deux Régions, avec l'Étude de leurs Antiquités, de leurs Populations anciennes et modernes, de leur Géographie et de leur Histoire. Ouvrage accompagné de Planches.* Par L. HEUZEY, Ancien Membre de l'École Française d'Athènes. Publié sous les Auspices du Ministère de l'Instruction Publique et du Ministère d'État. Paris: Firmin Didot Frères, Fils, et C<sup>ie</sup>. 1860. 8vo. pp. 496.

THE predominant passion of adventurers in these last years seems to be for climbing mountains. With every month some new volume from the English press, or some spirited letter in the London weekly journals, acquaints us with the discoveries and exploits of the "Alpine Club." The ascent of Mont Blanc and Monte Rosa has now become a common affair, hardly worthy of boasting or detailed statement, — as common as the ascent of Skiddaw and Helvellyn in the last generation. The ambition of mountain tourists now is to stand where no foot of man has stood before; to reveal in the Pyrenees and Alps peaks hitherto unknown, or to open to the science of civilized man the ranges hitherto beyond his quest.